

THE CHURCHES WITH NO CLOCKS

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The following is by Pastor Buddy Smith, Grace Baptist Church, Malanda, Queensland, Australia <smiletex@bigpond.net.au> --

There is a very strange group of churches I have stumbled across in Australia. They are the churches with no clocks. I visited four of them recently and have the pleasure of pastoring another. There is not a clock to be found in any of them. Admittedly, most of the people who attend still wear a watch, but it is amazing the effect it has on the church for it to have no clock. Here are a few observations I made in the churches with no clocks:

The song service seems to be freer and not ruled by the faint metronomic ticking of the clock. When the soloist breaks down in tears, nobody even thinks about how much time it will take for them to finish the special. Everybody just cries with them.

The preacher does not need to race the clock to the finishing line at 12 noon. In fact, I sat in a service in one of these churches recently and feasted sumptuously at the Father's table for over an hour, and it troubled me not at all that the dear preacher was "almost half an hour late finishing the sermon." No, I take that back, he wasn't late. He was just on time. His hearers would have thought he was late if they'd had a clock to hold him accountable. In another of these strange churches without clocks, the pastor told the visiting speaker not to even worry about the time, but to just give the people everything he had brought for them. So he did. And no one complained. Strange, very strange.

I saw a brother who was carrying a heavy burden over a sick child get a dozen hugs and a thousand words of comfort, and nobody cared what time it was.

The people who attend these churches do not seem the least bit concerned about getting home in a hurry after the services. I have seen them talk to each other for over an hour after the sermon. I got the impression that their hearts were so full that they just needed more time together so they could do a bit of "running over" before they wandered off home. One dear old lady in one of these churches told me it was 3 PM before she finished her lunch. And it is the same at night. These strange clockless Christians actually sit down and talk to each other over a cuppa [a cup of tea], and show no desire to depart.

The prayer meetings are affected by it as well. One of these churches has become so lax in their consciousness of the passing of time that they actually had five seasons of prayer

at a prayer meeting recently, and a few of these were quite lengthy. And they don't seem to be troubled by this at all. I wonder what would happen if revival came to one of these strange churches without clocks?

Would they pray all night?

Would they have preaching that went all day and far into the night?

Would they allow people to stand up in the services and testify of God's grace and not try to work by a schedule?

Would they linger on till dawn to pray for those who were convicted of sin and had not yet found peace with God?

Would they lose all track of time and forget what day it was because they loved God more than the clock?

Would they drift away home at last, having faces that outshone the sun, hearts full of joy, and lips that could no longer be silent?

I don't know, but I do know I want to go to a church that has a higher calling than watching the clock, and a better agenda than running to the world's timetable.

I suspect there are no clocks in Heaven. That's good enough for me.

I think I'll soon be leaving my watch at home.

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